

THE REVELATION

THE EXPOSITION

Paragraphs 78-109

78

The thirteenth chapter continues the introduction, giving us a further foreview of the vial and judgment periods (see the Analysis). It brings John into view, he having passed in spirit from heaven (4:1) to Jerusalem (11:1), and from thence, presumably, back to Patmos and to the sands of the sea there (13:1). Here the apostle is granted a new vision as he looks out upon the waters of the great sea (the Mediterranean), beholding, as he gazes, a beast rising up out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his head ten crowns, and upon his heads the names of blasphemy (13:1). This beast has the form of a leopard, his feet are like the feet of a bear, and his mouth is as the mouth of a lion. To this monster the dragon gives his power, his throne, and great authority (13:2). Finally, one of the beast's heads is wounded unto death, but the deadly wound is healed (13:3). Now, here too we must beware of imagination and keep to interpretation. And both are possible, for the Spirit gives us the key to a rightful understanding of the personality of the beast in the verses which follow. We are told in these that "there was given to the beast a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months" (13:5). Also, it is said that "he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (13:6). Also, it is declared that "it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (13:7). Such words as these only fit and describe one personality mentioned in Scripture, namely, the one of whom Paul speaks in much the same language (2 Thess. 2:3-12), that is, the Antichrist. This monster of iniquity, then, is seen rising up out of the Gentile nations--the sea standing for "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (17:15)--and is described as being at the head of ten kingdoms (13:1; 17:12), as having great wisdom and power (13:1), and as being the personification of blasphemy (13:1, 6; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4). Moreover, the vision discovers [reveals] this beast as [to be] one who demands the worship of the saints (13:8), and also, when such worship is refused, as [to be] their arch persecutor (13:7-10). We have before us, therefore, a detailed picture of the conditions of the great tribulation: the time being the last three and a half years; there being in existence a ten-fold political confederation of which the Antichrist is the head (17:1); it being the time of man's exaltation and blasphemy, God being defied by the Antichrist and his followers (13:6); and it being a period when the saints witness against the Antichrist and when many suffer agony and death for so doing (13:7, 8). When we come to the vial period description, these events being there described as actually taking place, much of this will be repeated. But here we are granted with John to see from afar the gleam of the tribulation fires which will finally be lighted and which will develop into a world-wide conflagration (13:7-10).

79

The latter half of the thirteenth chapter (13:11-18) is taken up with the description of "another beast" who rises from "the earth", that is, from the land of Palestine (13:11), instead of from "the sea" (13:1), that is, from some Gentile nation, and who is for this reason, as may be supposed, not a Gentile like the Antichrist (see Paragraph 37), but a Jew. This second monster is similar in character and purpose to the first, which is the occasion of his bearing the same name of "beast." But he has this peculiarity, that while he speaks as a dragon, he has "two horns like a lamb" (13:11), which indicates that his appearance and pretension, along with satanic characteristics and energy, will be altogether innocent and peaceable (2 Cor. 11:14). But the saints are given to understand that he has full and close alliance with the "first beast," namely, the Antichrist, and that he is on earth for no other purpose than to be the defender and propagator of his fame and interests (13:12). As God permitted Jannes and Jambres to exercise great power on behalf of Pharaoh (2 Tim. 3:8), so also here He allows this false prophet to do "great wonders," so that he makes fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men and deceives those who dwell upon the earth by means of the miracles which he has power to do in the sight of the beast (13:13, 14). He is even permitted, finally, to bring to pass that which godless science has sought after but never accomplished, namely, to give life to an inanimate thing. First, he constructs an image and then he makes it speak, foisting this representation of the Antichrist upon the credulity of men and demanding--as Nebuchadnezzar did in his day (Dan. 3:1-7)--that all shall bow and worship the image which has been so made and vitalized, meting out death to those who refuse to worship it (13:14, 15). Having proceeded as far as this, this dreadful trinity of evil--the dragon, the Antichrist and the false prophet--combine to bring the whole world into subjection, fixing marks upon the right hand or in the forehead of both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, and not permitting any man to buy or sell save that one who has this mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (13:16, 17). The Spirit then gives us the true number of the "first beast," that is, the Antichrist. This is not the number of deity which we may surmise is 777, this expressing a perfect completeness, but that of a man, that is, 666, which expresses a perfect incompleteness. As to the image, there is little doubt about the fact that it is the one to which the Lord referred in Matthew twenty-four in the phrase, "abomination of desolation" (24:15). This image, as we learn from that passage, is located in the holy place of the restored temple, and the false prophet here sets it forth as representative of the Antichrist and as worthy of divine honor and adoration (13:12-15). That men should worship such a false and diabolical object is almost beyond belief. But Paul declared that it would be so (2 Thess. 2:3-12), John here reiterates the fact (13:12), and those who have eyes to see may observe that many forces in these present days are making strongly in such a direction. We have thus given to us, through the foreview of this introduction, a characterization of the last three and a half years of Antichrist's rule. He has deified himself, he has displaced Christ from the esteem of men, he demands the worship which alone should be given to God, and he exercises diabolical authority over the whole earth.

80

It is a remarkable historical fact that while the Roman Empire at its dissolution lost its political unity, it has never lost its spiritual entity. To learn about the Empire one must, of course, turn back to ancient history. And yet the newspaper last from the press, in its European columns, will present to the reader the country and people of that Empire as in present existence and activity. In other words, political Rome ceased to be but moral Rome continues to live. This

is true in two particulars: first, in spite of the constant change in European national life, the ten-fold order of the Roman Empire has largely been maintained; and second, the racial and social characteristics of its people have unalterably been manifested. As to the first, if one takes ancient and present day maps of Europe for study, it will soon be discovered that the Roman ten-fold aspect has continued in approximate evidence, and also, that the effect of the late war has been to bring the nations visibly nearer the ancient division of states. And as to the last, wherein did the grasping, gripping and grinding process of the late war differ from what was the political meat upon which Rome's great Caesars fed? The vision of Daniel concerning Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome showed a steady downward progress in the image to the ten toes of its feet (Dan. 2:25-43), and this has indicated to some interpreters that the fulfillment of that vision was wholly and finally reached in Rome's ten-fold subdivision. This conclusion, no doubt, is in part true. But a larger truth lies in the interpretation of that image, which is not so often recognized. As a matter of fact, as we have said, Rome has never ceased to exist, for the Roman elements are all of them still in force. Hence, the ten toes of the image, prophetically and accurately speaking, have never yet been developed. Rome taught the world how to war, and having conquered, how to rule with a rod of iron. And the nations of Europe, through their Attilas, Napoleons and Kaisers, have put into effect the lesson learned. And to this day the nations know no other way of ruling in spite of the efforts of altruistic theologians and statesmen. Thus it is that Rome's political principles remain in force. And so it will continue till the whole dreadful system is headed up in the Antichrist, the ten kings having given their power to him (13:1-6; 17:7-13). Then the world will see once more a ten-fold imperial Rome; and then Europe and finally the whole earth will have an emperor whom it may worship both as man and god (13:4). The world will demand in that day a superman. And it will have it, only by and in the power of him whom the Holy Spirit calls the dragon (13:1, 2). It will be then, for the first time, that the toes of the image will have their climacteric fulfillment. It will be then also that the God of heaven will set up His kingdom which will never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44, 45). At that time God's own Superman will have come; and, for the first time in the history of the world, a King will rule in righteousness (Isa. 32:1, 2; Ps. 72:1-19).

81

Those who interpret the Scriptures, when this is possible, in a literal manner, have little difficulty with most of its passages, for such persons find their greatest satisfaction in accepting these as they have been written. But there are some interpreters of this kind who hesitate to believe that the description given in chapter thirteen concerning the mark which the Antichrist is to fix upon either the hand or forehead of his followers (13:16, 17; 16:2) is to be understood as foretelling what will be an actual experience. There is, however, no reason for thinking that this description is symbolical; and there is much reason, both from past and present experiences, for concluding that what is prophesied will actually take place. As confirmatory of this last, we quote an article by D. M. Panton, which recently appeared in the London "Christian" (issue of February 8, 1923), and which was based upon information presented by the "Daily Mail" (issue of July 24, 1902).

The Roman Catholic Church in France is constantly threatened by almost countless dangers, but by none more powerful than by that extraordinary secret society known to its members as the F.D.L.C., which being interpreted stands for Les Freres de la Cote (The Brothers of the Coast).

Few Englishmen, and not many Frenchmen either, for the matter of that, have ever heard of this remarkable Society. Its members, to the number of two and a half millions, consist entirely of boys from the ages of fourteen to twenty. The Society has two objects in view. First and foremost, they are bound together for the propagation and encouragement of atheism and the destruction of the power of the Papal Church. On the arm of each member is tattooed in large print the letters A.D. signifying Anti-Dieu. So powerful are the Brethren of the Coast, that discipline (in their schools) is made a practical impossibility, though to their credit let it be said that, if they are generously and kindly treated, they behave themselves, and confine their attention entirely to the propagation of pure and unadulterated atheism.

The punishment meted out by the Society to those of its members who break their vows is terribly severe. The most disgusting and ignominious barbarities are resorted to. Sometimes the lobes of the ears are cut; at others a great cross is scratched on the sinner's arm with a penknife; while if his offence be small, he is merely fined. But just as the vows are terrible, so are the punishments for breaking them cruel and severe. Punishment, however, is rarely resorted to, for the Brethren of the Coast are more than loyal to their Society and their oaths.

The Society is controlled by three so called 'chiefs,' who have their headquarters in Paris. The head chief, who is practically a despot, is unknown to all the two-and-a-half-millions of members save the second chief. Through this second chief he issues his decrees, and no one else is even cognizant of his name. So far, the priests have been powerless to put down this extraordinary, this terrible institution. Indeed, not only is Roman Catholicism threatened, and dangerously threatened by this remarkable Brotherhood, but the movement presents a menace to the entire Christian world.

Each member, in addition to having his arm branded with the letters A.D., wears a badge in the shape of a red moon, and the local chiefs bear distinguishing tattoo marks on their right hands.

The only comment which it is necessary to make upon the above startling statement is, that what is may be again, and what is in the lesser degree may likewise be in the greater.

82

As 10:7 is the pivotal verse in the book as related to the time of the resurrection and translation of the saints, so 14:1-20 is the pivotal chapter as related to the same. This chapter has to do with the seventh trumpet, and describes the transference of the church from earth to heaven (14:1-5, 14-16). If then, we may locate the chapter in the prophetic plan, we shall be able to understand when the church will be completed and the resurrection and translation will take place, not, of course, as to time--which is hidden in the counsels of the Father (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7)--but as to its relationship to other events. Nor is this locating so difficult as it appears, provided we keep in view the position in the Analysis which the chapter occupies. First then, it is to be observed that the chapter is divided into three parts, which may be described, in the phraseology of Leviticus, as follows: first, the first-fruits

(14:1-5); second, the harvest (14:14-16); and third, the vintage (14:17-20). Second, it is to be observed that the chapter's general presentation is the coming of Christ for and with His saints, because, however the first-fruits part is to be explained, the harvest part is certainly to be interpreted as describing the coming for, and the vintage part, the coming with. Third, it is to be observed that the vintage part is the scriptural equivalent of the judgment of the nations recorded in the nineteenth chapter (19:11-20), and, therefore, does not find its fulfillment in the fourteenth chapter, this being a prophetic view of what takes place in the nineteenth. Fourth and lastly it is to be observed, the vintage part being a foreview of the nineteenth chapter that it follows that the harvest and first-fruits parts are also foreviews of the same chapter. In other words, the fourteenth chapter is, as the Analysis indicates, an introduction to the vial and judgment periods (see the Analysis), being the prophetic portrayal of events which do not actually occur in the fourteenth chapter but at a later period, namely, at the time indicated by the nineteenth. This view of the fourteenth chapter as related to the nineteenth explains why there is a duplication of events in the two chapters, the one being the foreview and the other its fulfillment. It also makes clear several important facts, as follows: first, that the nineteenth chapter is under the seventh trumpet; second, that it is there that the Lord comes for His saints (10:7; 14:14; 19:1-9); third, that it is there that He comes with His saints (19:1-16); and fourth and lastly, that the second coming of Christ is not disjointed--as if seven or more years were between the coming for and coming with--but rather, is one continuous event.

83

The questions, Who are the one hundred and forty-four thousand mentioned in the seventh chapter (7:1-8), and, What is the meaning of the scene portrayed in connection with this company as described in the fourteenth (14:1-5), are two of the most difficult problems which present themselves in the book of the Revelation. There are, however, some statements concerning the subject, as based upon the record, which may be made with a good deal of certainty. These are as follows. First, the persons described are Jews, for they are sealed from the twelve tribes of Israel (7:1-8). Second, they are Christians, for they are described as the "servants of our God" (9:4); as those who have "the seal of God on their foreheads" (9:4); as those who have the Lamb's "name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads" (14:1); as those "that had been purchased"--by, of course, the blood of Christ--"out of the earth"; as those "that were not defiled with women, for they are virgins"; and as those "that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (14:4). Third, miraculous favor is shown to them (7:1-3). Fourth, divine protection of a peculiar kind is given to them, for, while death is permitted to overcome their fellows, it is not allowed to touch them (9:1-5). Fifth, they "were purchased"--by the blood of Christ--"out of the earth" (14:3). Sixth, they "were purchased from among men, to be the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb" (14:4). Seventh, "in their mouth was found no guile; they are without blemish" (14:5). And eighth and last, they are suddenly seen on the heavenly Mount Zion, having passed through the tribulation, standing with the Lamb before the throne and singing a new song, which no man could learn, with a voice of many waters and as the voice of a great thunder and as of harpers harping with their harps (14:1, 2). The Holy Spirit gives this much, but no more. It is not unlawful, however, to venture making, on the basis of what is revealed, a single deduction. If our assumption to the effect that the fourteenth chapter is a prophetic foreview of the nineteenth is a correct one, then we may conclude, since thus the earlier parts of the chapter describe the coming of Christ for His

church, that the one hundred and forty-four thousand are a first-fruits company of translated Jewish saints, who immediately precede the general harvest of resurrected and translated ones, this honor being granted to them presumably on account of their having witnessed face to face against the Antichrist and of their having chosen in earth's darkest hour to follow the Lamb whithersoever He might lead them. If this is true, the following interesting facts are brought to light: the oracles of God were given first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (Rom. 3:1, 2); Christ came first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (Matt. 2:1; 15:21-28); the Holy Spirit was sent first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (Acts 2:1-5; 10:1, 44); Christ commanded that His gospel should be proclaimed first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (Matt. 10:5, 6; 28:19); Paul preached first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (Acts 13:44-48; Rom. 1:16); and now, Christ calls to Himself first a small Jewish company of saints, and then the larger company of Jewish and Gentile ones. But this last is mentioned as a prophetic possibility, and not, in any sense, as an established prophetic fact.

84

As a further proof that Matthew twenty-four and the central portion of the Revelation (chapters 6 to 19) are concurrent both in time and matter, it is to be noted that each speaks of a gospel preaching period in the midst of the seven years of the Antichrist, and that each is connected with the time of the end. In Matthew twenty-four the phraseology is as follows: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (24:14); and in the Revelation it is as follows: "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (14:6, 7). In the Matthew passage Christ declares, as soon as the gospel has been preached during the period referred to, that the end will come. In the Revelation passage the Holy Spirit makes it plain that the angel with the everlasting gospel--he being the heavenly token of what the saints are doing on earth--flies through the heaven at the time when men are being tempted to worship the beast and his image, and to receive his mark in their foreheads or in their hands (14:6-11), which is the same end-time to which the Lord refers, as recorded in Matthew (24:13-15). The two scriptures set forth the fact, therefore, that there is to be a declaration of warning and grace in the days of the Antichrist, which will have special reference to the particular temptations then in force (14:9-11) and which will be a special preparation for entrance into the coming kingdom (Matt. 24:14). We may believe, as Antichrist's beguilements will be world-wide (13:5-8), that the proclamation of the evangel will likewise be world-wide (14:6). In this case, we are probably within right reasoning when we conclude that God, at this time, will move mightily in the hearts of men, in both convicting and convincing power, and that He will thus match and overmatch the deadening and destroying work which Satan will be doing. It is probable that the particularly active agents in this world-wide preaching will be those Christian Jews who, being persecuted by the Antichrist, will be driven out of Palestine into the four corners of the earth, and who, even as they flee, will testify against the Man of Sin and call men to repentance and salvation (Acts 8:1-4; 12:6-11).

85

The fourteenth chapter contains two verses which are most important, both in respect to interpretation and episode. We refer to verses twelve and thirteen. Here we are told that it is in the periods of the vials and judgments--this being the foreview of it--that the "patience of the saints" will specially appear (14:12), and that blessed are the dead who "die in the Lord, from henceforth" (14:13), both verses being suggestive of what was said in the previous chapter when the Spirit was warning all those, in these anti-Christian days, who would be tempted to persecute the saints (13:10). As for interpretation, it is clear that the phraseology is specifically Christian, the sentence "die in the Lord" (14:13) not being applicable to any other persons than those who are members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 15:18; 1 Thess. 4:16). And as for episode, it is plain that the time in view is one of special persecution, testing, suffering and martyrdom; in other words, that of Antichrist's utmost activity of hatred and vengeance against the saints (14:12, 13). In confirmation of this last statement, several things may be noticed. First, the word "patience" is from the Greek noun *hupomone*, which is derived from the verb *hupomeno*, which signifies, literally, to stay under. Thus "patience," in the Greek meaning of the word, signifies a staying under, or endurance. This suggests that the patience referred to is an endurance which has to be exercised in the midst of and in opposition to great obstacles; and it is clear from the context that these are those which are connected with the Antichrist's persecutions. Second, the phrase "blessed are the dead" (14:13) suggests persecution unto death, that is, martyrdom, which reveals the fact that many saints during the last three and a half years of the seven-year period of the Antichrist will be called upon to seal their faith with their blood (14:12). And lastly, the phrase "from henceforth" (14:13) manifests the fact that the pronouncement of blessing which God makes in respect to the martyred ones is not a general one, as if it were related to all martyrs of all time, but a special one, as related to these of a particular time, who will die for the sake of Christ from this time onward. This last casts a lurid glare in respect to the saints over these days of life and experience, for it reveals the fact that the persecution of the Antichrist will be so terrible as it reaches its climax that it will be more tolerable to die than to live, and thus, that the supremely blessed and happy persons will be, not those saints who are living, but those who are dead. It is all mysterious beyond understanding what God appoints, now and hereafter, to His loving and devoted servants. But however strange the process, the issue here is certain and glorious: "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (14:13).

86

The personage referred to in the fourteenth verse of the fourteenth chapter is not the Son of man but one "like" Him. But this one, being like Him, represents Him. Also, it is evident that the personage does this in respect to the Son of man's second advent, for he is seen sitting upon a cloud, wearing a golden crown and bearing in his hand a sharp sickle (14:14), which details point forward to Christ's coming return in glory (Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 19:12; Joel 3:13). The fact, however, that the personage is not the Son of man but only like Him proves beyond doubt that the passage does not describe the second advent as here taking place. What it does is to prefigure this event. It is thus that we have the event itself described later in the Revelation, in the nineteenth chapter (19:11-15). The whole portrayal of the fourteenth chapter, therefore, is a foreview of what comes afterwards. This again confirms our thought that this fourteenth chapter is introductory to the vial and judgment periods, and particularly to the judgment

period, its finger-point being toward the great events which are described as taking place in chapter nineteen. We are thus led to call attention to what follows the fourteenth verse, this being a setting forth, under the figure of a vintage-scene, of the terrible events of judgment which will be connected with the second coming, God's wrath being poured out upon the beast and his armies until the blood stands up to the horses' bridles--as occurred more than once in the late world war, great streams being turned into blood--even to the space of a thousand and two hundred furlongs, that is, for over one hundred and eighty-three (183.86) English miles (14:17-20). Here again, there is an exact parallelism between this chapter and the nineteenth, for as this scene of judgment (14:17-20) succeeds the one which sets forth him who is like the Son of man and who comes upon the cloud of heaven (14:14-16), so there follows a description of the white horse warrior (19:11-16), a similar judgment scene involving the same persons and ending in the same catastrophe of destruction (19:17-21).

87

In considering now the fifteenth chapter, we are to remember that we are still dealing with the introduction to the vial and judgment periods (see the Analysis). We are to remember also, as has been made manifest, that the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth chapters are specially related to the vial period, and the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters to the judgment period. We feel justified in making these distinctions on the basis of the internal evidence of these passages, and we are persuaded that a close observation of their contents will confirm this view. The fifteenth chapter, therefore, is to be connected in mind with the fourteenth, as a part of it and a development from it. Here, as is the case with the other introductions, it is to be observed that it is a foreview of the events which are afterwards described as belonging to the period of which it is a part. That is, the chapter anticipates, as did the fourteenth, those episodes which are described in the judgment period, portraying these from a divine and heavenly point of view. This is the explanation of why it begins with a sign, or wonder (see Paragraph 72). As the twelfth chapter was introduced with a sign, namely, that of the woman (12:1), which had reference to the vial and judgment periods, but specially to the former of these, so it is that this fifteenth chapter is introduced with a like sign or wonder, namely, that of the seven angels having the seven last plagues (15:1), which has special reference to the judgment period now about to begin. It is to be kept in mind also that these signs, or wonders, mark off these vial and judgment periods as being the most tragic of all of the five which are related to the Antichrist (see Paragraph 72), they signifying the climax of man's earthly sin and the culmination of God's earthly punishments.

88

The vision following the two signs of the twelfth chapter was that of the "woman," that is, the church in its Jewish aspect, fleeing into the "wilderness" and being persecuted there, largely unto death (12:1-17). The vision following the sign of the fifteenth chapter is that of this company of persecuted and martyred ones established in heaven, victorious over the beast, over his image, and over the mark and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, and singing the song of Moses the servant of God (Exod. 15:1-19) and that of the Lamb (15:1-4). This then is the third vision which we have had of martyred saints in heaven. The first followed the wars which the Antichrist carried on in the first part of the first half of the prophetic "week" (6:9-11; see Paragraph

43); the second succeeded the sealing of the one hundred and forty-four thousand and the persecution of these in the second part of the first half of the "week" (7:9-17; see Paragraph 50); and now this new one comes after the greatly intensified persecution of the saints in the first part of the second half of the "week" (see Paragraph 51). These three visions, as will be seen, are of different and separate companies of the martyred ones. But it is to be observed that there are similarities of characteristic which wonderfully unite the three, and in doing so, greatly encourage faltering hearts. First, as the martyrs' portion on earth is one of sorrow, so in heaven it is one of joy. Second, as their suffering on earth is for Christ, so their comforting in heaven is by Christ. Third, as their martyrdom on earth means crying and moans, so their experience in heaven means singing and praise. And lastly, as the yielding up of their lives on earth means humiliating defeat, so the taking up of their lives in heaven means exalting and compensating victory. We learn thus that God gives the double, not only in judgment, but also in reward. For it is evident, in the day of recompense, that He will forget nothing and will remember everything, and that He will multiply heavenly compensations beyond all earthly losses. Surely it is well worthwhile to serve, suffer, and, if need be, die for such a One as Christ. This is what this fifteenth chapter assures us, for these tribulation saints find, when finally they rest from their labors and are with the Lord, that He pours upon their heads the tears which He has kept in His bottle (Ps. 56:8), and, in doing, transforms them into a fragrant and healing oil (Ps. 23:5; Isa. 61:1-3).

89

Some interpreters have made much of the phrase in the fifteenth chapter, "the song of Moses, the servant of God" (15:3), and this in seeking to establish the fact that those who sing this song are not Christians but only Jewish tribulation saints, it being pointed out that Moses' song was sung under the law and was not more than one of victory after a physical deliverance (Exod. 15:1-19). But it is to be noted that such interpreters pass over the fact that those who sing the "song of Moses" also sing "the song of the Lamb" (15:3), which is certainly one of spiritual redemption (Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:15, 16). In other words, the same persons sing both the song of victory for physical deliverance and the song of praise for spiritual redemption. It is not correct to say, therefore, that the song is only one of law and for physical victory, for it is also one of grace and for spiritual redemption. Recognizing this two-fold fact forbids our coming to the conclusion that these saints are only Jews and not Christians, and warrants the conclusion that they are both the one and the other. And there is reason for their singing the two songs; for as the followers of Moses sang of their deliverance from the persecutions of their antichrist, that is, Pharaoh, so these tribulation saints will sing of deliverance from the persecutions of their Antichrist, namely, the Man of Sin; and, as Christians in these present days sing in praise to Christ for their redemption through His precious blood, so these saints in the days to come will sing in praise to Him for their redemption through that same blood. These martyrs in heaven, therefore, look down and back, as a result of their earthly experiences, upon both a great deliverance and a mighty redemption; and, in consequence, their two-fold songs of praise fill the courts of heaven (15:1-4). They are indeed Jewish tribulation saints. But they are also Christian Jewish tribulation saints.

90

It is conceded by scholars that the best reading of the phrase in the fifteenth chapter, "Thou king of saints" (15:3), is, "Thou, king of the nations." This is the reading given by Dr. Eberhard Nestle in his text of the New Testament, which is founded on the three texts of Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and Bernard Weiss, and which is generally regarded by scholars as a standard resultant. It is also the reading in the margins of the Authorized and Revised Versions. Moreover, it is the reading which the context implies and thus calls for. This last conclusion is reached in the following manner: First, it is not conceivable that the phrase "king of saints" is to be found in the New Testament, for Christ is never called the "king" of the church, but rather and always her "Lord." And second, it is not likely that He would here be designated as "the king of the ages"--as some manuscripts suggest and as the Revised Version maintains--for the idea of an eternal, or even, a man-age, kingship is not in view in the words of the passage, but rather, that to which the kingly office of Christ is scripturally related, namely, a rule over the Jews, and through the Jews over the Gentile nations, and each in and through the period of the millennium. It is this last-named time which will bring into vision the kingly quality, position, reign and glory of Christ, and this in a double connection, first, as "king of the Jews" (Ps. 72:1-19; Isa. 32:1-20; Matt. 27:37) and second, as "king of the nations" (Joel 3:1-17; Zech. 14:1-9; Rev. 15:3, margin). This particular verse (15:3) specifies Christ's kingship over, not the Jews, but the nations, for it is one which looks forward to the judgments which God is about to mete out upon the Antichrist as king of the ten kingdoms (17:12, 13) and thus upon the nations which are under his sway and are fulfilling his wicked behests (17:14). Hence it is that these martyr ones in glory, who shortly before were done to death by the Man of Sin and his followers, look forward to the speedily approaching time when Christ will declare Himself "King of kings and Lord of lords" (17:14; 19:16), and thus they praise His "works" and "ways," hailing Him not only as "Lord God Almighty" but also as "king of the nations" (15:3). It will not be long now in the unfolding of our studies before God will place His Son upon His rightful throne. The series of judgments described in the fifteenth chapter, as well as those which are described in the succeeding chapters, prepare the way for this exaltation.

91

In coming now to the sixteenth chapter, we reach the next time-period, namely, that of the seven vials (see the Analysis). All of these seven vials are mentioned in this chapter (16:2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 17), so that the passage presents a full description of the various events connected with their emptying. The vials themselves are probably the bowls which are related to the golden altar (1 Kings 7:50; 1 Chron. 28:17; 2 Chron. 4:8; Zech. 14:20), the heavenly imagery throughout this portion of Scripture being that of the temple, its articles, utensils and service (6:9; 7:15; 11:19; 14:15; 15:2, 5, 6-8). This suggests that the judgments which are now poured out upon men, consequent upon the emptying of the bowls, are because of religious transgressions, many Jews and more Gentiles having combined to give the worship and service to Antichrist which is due alone to Deity (13:5-8, 15; 14:9, 10), and God punishing them accordingly (16:1, 2). The Spirit thus establishes a distinction between the vial period and the following judgment period, the first having a markedly religious aspect and the second a markedly national and political one. The divine background of the seven vial-scenes is that of the heavenly temple. The satanic background of these scenes is that of the earthly temple at Jerusalem, restored, reorganized and revitalized, but given over to the worship and service of the Antichrist. Thus

two religious systems are here in evidence, God's and man's, the true and the false; and at this particular juncture these two--the climax of divine and human affairs having been reached--come into open contact and conflict. The question is, which is the more stable and enduring? God answers this question, notably and finally. From this time on, it is a case of unfolding and intensifying judgment, and the divine answer as to the preliminary of condemnation is here given, it being seen in the outpouring of the seven vials and heard in the cries of condemned and suffering men (16:2-11).

92

We called attention in an earlier part of this exposition to the fact that God, as far as possible, places mercy in the midst of judgment, with the intention of bringing men to repentance and salvation (see Paragraphs 37 and 44). We see this principle of divine compassion exemplified in this sixteenth chapter, in connection with the outpouring of the seven vials described therein. For terrible as the judgments are, men being afflicted with noisome and grievous sores (15:3), the sea being turned into blood (15:4), the rivers and fountains of waters becoming blood (15:4), and the sun scorching men with fire (15:7), yet it is true that God restrains Himself in the midst of these manifestations, making the punishments, as compared with later ones, not general but partial, and not extreme but mitigated. But the recognition of this truth does not bring us to the end of what may be discovered in God's words and ways as here revealed. For clear as divine mercy is, it is equally clear that there is a great advancement here of meted-out judgment. The last passage in the record which particularly described divine punishment was in the sixth chapter, where we had occurring a great earthquake, the sun becoming black as sackcloth, the moon becoming as blood, the stars of heaven falling, and the mountains and islands being moved out of their places (6:12-14; see Paragraph 44). But that past scene (16:12-14) is almost as nothing in comparison with the present one (16:1-8). And the difference is this: the first is located in the first three and a half years, and the second in the second three and a half; the first before the Antichrist makes claim to deity and demands worship, and the second after he does so; and the first before men accept of the Man of Sin as the one worthy of worship and service, and the second after they do this. In other words, this sixteenth chapter is later in time and it sets forth a more developed condition of willfulness in sin; and hence, God's punishments are wider in extent and more drastic in form and measure. We have not yet reached the end, in the record, either of grace or judgment. But this passage takes us a long way onward in the development of the one and the other. And if the earlier process of judgment is so dreadful, what will the full end be!

93

It would be a question with the average person, in studying this sixteenth chapter (16:1-10), whether the description of divine punishments which is given in it is meant to be understood in a literal or symbolical sense; and it is probable that the same average person would conclude that a symbolic meaning is to be attached to it. The argument of such an individual probably would be this: first, God is a God of love and compassion and He does not willingly afflict, so that it is beyond imagining that He would actually put sores upon men's bodies, turn their water supply into blood, and scorch them with the sun's heat; and second, the Revelation is a symbolical book and it is not to be turned into literal fact. But before we allow ourselves to reach a conclusion of this kind, it will be well for us to

bring into mind certain considerations such as these: God is not only a God of love and compassion, He is also One of wrath (Rom. 2:8, 9; Rev. 6:17; 16:1) and judgment (Exod. 12:12; Rev. 14:7); He has in times past meted out grievous punishments upon the bodies of men, some of which in the Old Testament were exactly similar to those described here (Exod. 7:20, 21; 9:8-11); and a literal type, such as that of the judgment in Egypt, calls for a literal antitype. Finally, there seems good reason to believe that the Revelation, while it contains symbolism, is not such a symbolical book as is generally supposed. As touching this last we make free to say that the idea of symbolism, if loosely held, may be made a deadly enemy of true interpretation; and we make free to add that we believe that the application of this idea accounts for the largely prevalent misinterpretation of many otherwise markedly clear passages of Scripture. If this same spiritualizing process had been applied by the saints of old to the Old Testament prophecies, they would have had no before-hand belief in the threatenings of Moses and Aaron concerning Pharaoh and his followers, nor even in any one of the notable prophetic items which the Spirit recorded in respect to the earthly life of our Lord. And yet God proved in time that all of these were to be understood literally, that is, exactly as had been stated. We hold, for these reasons, that this sixteenth chapter is to be interpreted in a literal manner; and hence, we conclude that the events described will take place actually and exactly as they are portrayed. And we would add to this statement this more general one, namely, that it is our conviction that the only safe method of interpreting the Scripture as a whole, including the Revelation, is to give--unless the text or context wholly and absolutely forbid--a natural and therefore literal meaning to it. To do this is consistency, as related to fulfilled prophetic passages, and sanity, as related to unfulfilled. Not to do it is to lead to serious results, such as permitting interpreters to give rein to their imagination as to what may or may not be true; such as putting a premium upon natural scholarship as the basis of interpretation, which is not allowable (1 Cor. 1:21; 2:1-16); such as accepting the principle that the Word is only to be understood by the learned and few, whereas it is manifest that the Bible was written primarily for the common people (Mark 12:37) and is intended to be understood by the many (Acts 17:11, 12); and finally, such as producing almost as many interpretations as there are interpreters, one man's imagination in respect to any given passage being as good as that of any other.

94

There are certain passages of Scripture which, from a natural standpoint, one would be glad to turn from, or at least gloss over. The one in the sixth chapter (6:12-17), which has been commented upon (see Paragraph 44), is one of these; and the one before us in this chapter (16:1-11) is another. What we are thinking of just now is not so much God's terrible and vengeful anger against sinners, startling as this is, but rather the attitude of such sinners toward God in the midst of punishment, though this be acknowledged by such as being most justly deserved. No person can study himself and men at large without becoming aware of the fact that the natural heart is past understanding in its hardness and bitterness as related to God's judgments. But most persons harbor the thought that divine judgment, if sufficiently severe, will break down the will and lead the soul at last to repentance. Hence, there is a general hope, even among Christians, that the fires of hell will refine and transform. But these sixth and sixteenth chapters point to an entirely different conclusion from this. In both passages the fires of the nether world, as it were, are lighted before their time, and they burn fiercely enough--if such could produce repentance--to bring any man

to his knees or any number of men to theirs. However, we watch in vain for such a result. In the earlier passage men hide in the dens and rocks of the mountains and pray to the mountains and rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the face of Him that sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb (6:15, 16); and in this later one they gnaw their tongues for pain and then blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and they repent not of their deeds (16:10, 11). The truth of the matter is, there is a point where men, because of cherished and indulged sin, find themselves incapable of repentance; and it is clear that all men who are finally lost reach this place, some midway in life and some at its end. Moreover, it is apparent from this passage, as well as from other scriptures, that there is something self-perpetuating in sin and punishment. Here, these men are judged and punished because they are followers of the beast, or Antichrist (16:10). But being judged and punished, they blaspheme God, which is further sin and which calls for further judgment and punishment. So sin may go on *ad infinitum*; and so judgment and punishment likewise may go on *ad infinitum*. It is sin which condemns the sinner; and it is sin added to sin, in this world or the other, which makes his condemnation endless.

95

Whatever men may think about demons, judging from the sixteenth chapter God evidently believes in them (16:13, 14). And here He shows that they have a potent and far-reaching influence over earthly and human affairs (16:14). According to the general testimony of Scripture, we may understand that these strange creatures are fallen (Mark 5:8; Luke 8:30), devilish (Matt. 12:43-45; 1 Cor. 10:19-21), and unincarnate (Matt. 8:31, 32; Mark 5:13; Luke 8:33); and also that they are subject to Satan (Eph. 2:2; 2 Chron. 18:19-22), desirous of incarnation (Matt. 8:30-32), and always intent upon destructive purposes (Mark 1:25, 26; 9:26; Luke 4:29; Eph. 6:12). In this passage the emptying of the sixth vial sets free three unclean spirits, in the likeness of frogs, which emanate from the great trinity of evil--Satan, Antichrist, and the false prophet--which work miracles, and which go forth to the kings of the earth to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty (16:12-14). This is the day of which John speaks in the first chapter (1:10), and which is the central theme of the Revelation (see Paragraph 16); and it is the one upon which God will take final and destructive issue with the Antichrist and his followers, in view of their impious ways. And our passage makes it unmistakably clear that the divinely permitted preparation for judgment upon these will be brought to pass by unseen and almost unknown beings, namely, demons. We do not well, therefore, to make light of the idea of a spirit-world, however its true character is travestied by present-day platform orators. This world is real, and it is nearer to us than we think. Also, it is powerful, not only over hell but also over earth, inclusive of many of the great personages of the earth. Moreover, it is present as well as future, the future condition as described in the text being but a development and culmination of what is now existing. This is the world which Christ understood so well and spoke of so often (Luke 9:42; 11:24), the one which Paul saw so clearly and dealt with so frequently (Acts 16:16-18; Eph. 2:1-3), the one which lies above and about us, influencing us easily and powerfully and only to be overcome by a Spirit greater than its lesser spirits (Matt. 12:28; Eph. 2:1-3; 6:10-17). Incidentally, it is a sad commentary upon human government to discover, so late in the affairs of men, that the wicked spirits of this great other-world finally control the kings of the earth and lead them up against God and His Anointed (16:13, 14). This is a far cry from Cromwellian liberty and Washingtonian idealism; and it prophesies not international evolution but devolution.

The "yellow peril" is no political fantasy, but most real as related to the present and future. Only the peril of the future is not only yellow but also brown. In other words, according to the sixteenth chapter of this book (16:12), there is to be in the last days a mighty uprising in the place of the sunrising, which will bring kings into vision who will have no kindly purposes toward those who live in the place of the sunsetting. In that day, at last, the east will meet the west, and this for deadly conflict. For the present, the issues between the west and east are, for the most part, moral and social. In that day they will be these, and also, commercial and political. And then, what the west has sown it will reap with dreadful certainty and in terrible measure. For nearly two thousand years westerners, by their civilizing without Christianizing, have scattered broadcast over those far-away lands the seeds of disbelief, so that Japan, Korea, China and India are rapidly going atheistic and agnostic. With then no Christian faith to restrain, why should they not accept the mandate of the prince of the air and be led captive by him at his will? A man who is not under the law of the Spirit is under that of the flesh, and the flesh lusts after the things of the flesh, in one form or another, through all the course of life. And what a man is, men are. Moreover, a nation is but a man multiplied. It is, however, with this difference: the many may combine, and in the process the power of the unit is increased by as many units as are added to it. The only question which remains in diplomacy and war, after this, is that of comparative leadership and quantity. It is this aspect of things which led Napoleon to declare that God is always on the side of the greater number of battalions. So He is, generally, as things go naturally, simply because His laws are not usually abrogated--till the time of His judgment has come. Here then is the realization of what the civilized world has dreaded so long, the marching westward of the uncivilized and godless eastern hordes. The occasion of it, invisibly, is the influence of the dragon (16:13), and visibly, the lust of conquest, particularly as related to Syria, Palestine and Jerusalem (16:13, 14). This will be the time of Har-Magedon, or Armageddon, the plains of Esdraelon becoming the gathering place of the armies of the earth (16:16). No battle is fought on that plain, but there they prepare for battle, marching then southward toward Jerusalem, and, as the record says, "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (16:14). Their objective is to destroy the Jews, who have been restored to their land under the Antichrist and whose city has become a world-center of commerce and wealth. But the day of the vengeance of God has come and they that touch Jerusalem touch the apple of His eye (Zech. 2:6-8). So the Lord will go forth as in the day of battle, coming in might and great power; and the west and east together will find themselves in the deadly grip of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords (Zech. 2:9-13; 14:1-5). It is clear, therefore, that the late world war was not the "battle of Armageddon," which prophetic students knew from the first. This battle, which is really the battle of the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:1-8), lies not in Europe but in Palestine, and it is yet in the future. And hence it is plain also that the League of Nations will not be able to keep peace on the earth. Whatever men of peace in these times may do will eventually be undone, till the Prince of Peace has come. To the end of the age, it will be even as Jesus said: "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars" (Matt. 24:6).

The introduction to the description of the various judgments is found from the eleventh through the fifteenth chapters, and particularly, in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters (see the Analysis and Paragraphs 65, 76). In reaching the seventeenth chapter, therefore, we find no introduction here inserted but come at once upon the description. This brings us, then, to the sixth time-period, namely, that of the seven judgments (see the Analysis). These judgments are as follows: first, the judgment of religious Babylon (17:1-18); second, that of commercial Babylon (18:1-24); third, that of the church (19:1-10); fourth, that of the Antichrist and the false prophet (19:11-20); fifth, that of the nations (19:11-21; 20:1-9); sixth, that of Satan (20:10); and seventh, that of the wicked dead (20:11-15). All of these judgments have been prepared for by those of a preliminary and partial kind, as betokened by the seals (6:1-17; 8:1), trumpets (8:7-13; 9:1-21; 11:15), thunders (10:3, 4), and vials (16:1-21). But now the final judgment-acts of God have come, and from henceforth there is for men neither mitigation nor escape. In all of the preliminary judgments God has shown great mercy, not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:8, 9), for in the very act of letting go the forces of destruction He has restrained and moderated them both in extensity and intensity (6:8; 8:7, 8-12; 9:15, 18; 11:13). Indeed, divine grace has gone so far as to secure a last world-wide preaching of the good tidings, which has called men to repentance and has sought to prepare them for the coming King and kingdom (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 10:8-11; 11:3-6; 14:6, 7). But in spite of these last acts of compassion, though they have been accompanied by the display of miraculous power (11:5, 6), men's hearts--as was true in Pharaoh's time--have been increasingly hardened and turned against God, so that now He has no other way to take but that of terrible and final judgment. It is evident, both from Scripture and history, that sinful men may reckon greatly upon God's patience. But trifling with divine mercy has a subjective result, which is generally unsuspected but is fearfully real, namely, the production in an unregenerate heart of a reprobate state. It is this which calls, finally, for a cutting short of grace and a letting fall of judgment. And this is what we have in the record from this time onward. In succession, one following another in regular order, the six judgments which pertain to sinners take place; and each one puts the wicked who are involved beyond hope of recovery.

98

The seventeenth chapter, which records the first judgment, presents to us apostasy in its final and universal form (17:1-5). Taking ancient Babylon with its Baal system of worship as the type of such, and the future restored Babylon with its corrupted religiousness as the representative of such, it portrays all of the apostate systems of the days of the Antichrist, however and wherever these may be found. Since Babylon is so definitely mentioned by the Spirit (16:18, 19; 17:5), we may be assured that that city is first in mind, and hence that it will contain in the last days in its reorganized condition every false religious system which men may devise, combined by the Antichrist, probably, into one. But it is plain that this literal Babylon, with its abounding apostasy, becomes at the time the progenitor and type of all apostasy throughout the world, and that thus the great western city, Rome, is also in mind. This seems quite certain in view of the fact that Babylon is not set upon seven hills while Rome is (17:7-9), and in view of the added fact that the description of the harlot woman is an exact one, outwardly and inwardly, of that master-production of apostasy, the Roman Catholic Church, (17:3-6) which has so long made its center and seat at Rome. And yet it should be kept in mind that Babylon does not stand for the Romish Church exclusively in the sense that it is the only apostate church in view. Verse two indicates a state of

Europe-wide, if not world-wide spiritual corruption, that is, one which extends beyond the Roman communion and is larger than its degeneracy. The Romish church, no doubt, is chiefly in view; but this, not in the exclusive sense but in the inclusive, involving and comprehending all other apostasies which are like unto it, these being frequently spoken of not only by John but also by Paul and Peter (Acts 20:28-30; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-8; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 3:1-7). In short, the scene is similar to what the late Mr. Stead presented in his widely circulated magazine, the English "Review of Reviews," when he soberly proposed a combination and coordination of all religious systems, leaving out in each the unimportant elements and keeping in the important ones, and putting all under the leadership of the pope of Rome. As it proved, Mr. Stead--though, unwittingly, he spoke prophetically--found himself before God's and man's time. But the divine, prophetic purpose in this direction will yet be fulfilled; and it is plain that the Man of Sin will be the satanic agent who will bring it to pass. For it is to be remembered that this seventeenth chapter is a prophecy of the years of the Antichrist, as verse three indicates; and thus the apostasy in view is that which is consummated in his time and under his fostering care, the harlot woman going into place and power upon the back of the scarlet-colored beast (17:3). It is a most solemn thought that the present-day efforts to bring to pass union between the great Catholic and Protestant churches is (although this is not the intention of Protestant leaders) slowly but surely preparing the way for this last-time confederation of evil. Since church union may only be obtained by compromise with essential truth, it follows that the inevitable consequence of such must be spiritual corruption, which is apostasy.

99

It is not to be taken for granted, because the Roman Catholic Church is antichristian, that her pope is the Antichrist. There are many persons who believe that the Roman Church is the most antichristian religious system which Satan has introduced into the spiritual chaos of this present age. But not a few such hold, with apparent reasonableness, that the popes of Rome are to be excelled in evil by another person who is yet to come, namely, the Antichrist, who is to fraternize for a time with Rome but, nevertheless, is to be separate from her (17:3). Such interpreters acknowledge that there are great parallelisms between Rome and Antichrist. At the same time they believe, while every pope--because of the system he represents--is *an* antichrist, that no future one of these will be *the* Antichrist. The following considerations bring them to this conclusion: First, there were antichrists long before the Roman Church had existence, for it is to be remembered that in the apostle John's days and thereafter there were many antichrists (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7), whereas the Roman Church did not begin in apostolic times but many scores of years afterwards. Second, the great historical antichrists, such as Caligula and Napoleon, were never popes of Rome and in some cases were the arch-enemies of the Roman Church. Third, the one chapter in the Bible which gives specific details concerning the union of Rome and the Antichrist, namely, the seventeenth of Revelation, shows a distinct difference between the two; the harlot being apostasy (including Rome), and the beast being the Antichrist, and she not carrying the beast--as would be the case if the beast were a pope--but the beast carrying her (17:3); also the beast being a king who succeeds several other kings, not one of whom was a pope, and he himself being a reincarnated king who had lived and reigned before there was a Roman Church and there were popes (17:8-11); and finally, the beast turning and rending the woman and continuing his existence without and apart from her (17:16; 19:19, 20). For these reasons the scriptural and historical evidence seems to indicate, while Rome

and the Antichrist in the last days will go into ecclesiastical and political power together, that each has its own position and sphere and meets end-time judgments different in time, place and kind (17:16; 19:19, 20). But though Rome is not the beast, let no Protestant call her a "Christian church" or have fellowship with her as such. In view of the fact that her theological system holds and teaches the doctrine of justification by works, in spite of whatever truth she surrounds this false doctrine with, she is radically and irremediably opposed to Christ and His gospel, and hence, she is in a deep and abiding sense antichristian; and the Lord's message concerning any personage who represents such a system is, "Receive him not into your house and give him no greeting, for he that gives him greeting partakes in his evil works" (2 John 7-11); and again, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities" (18:4, 5).

100

The two Babylons described in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters, representing the two systems which first fall under God's judgment, do not appear to be the same. They have some marks of similarity, but they have also certain definite ones of dissimilarity. As to likeness, they are both in the time and under the control of the Antichrist (17:3, 7-14; 16:10, 17-21); they are both lifted up in arrogance and blasphemy (17:3; 18:7); they are both guilty of shedding the blood of the saints (17:6; 18:24); and they both fall under the judgment of God (17:1, 16, 17; 18:2, 6-8). As to unlikeness, they bear different names (17:5; 16:19; 18:2); they are, in part, in different localities (17:9, 18; 18:17, 21); they run different courses (17:4, 5, 15, 18; 18:3, 11-19); and they come to different ends (17:16; 16:17-21). They are the same then in spirit, but they differ in development and in what they represent. "Mystery Babylon" is, in a special sense, Rome (17:9, 18), and it stands, first, for the apostasy which characterizes the Roman Catholic Church, and second, for all apostasy whether Roman, Greek or Protestant Catholic, such as will prevail in the last days of this age. "Great Babylon" is evidently the ancient city which Nebuchadnezzar built and named (Dan. 4:28-30), which, in the record, is set forth as rebuilt and glorified. These cities--Rome and Babylon--will be two centers to which Antichrist will give his kindly favor and from which he will exert his powerful but corrupting influence over the kings and nations of the earth, the one from a religious standpoint and the other from a commercial one (17:1-5; 18:1-3). There will also be a third center where he will fix his palace and display his glory, namely, Jerusalem (Dan. 11:43-45). Possessing this trinity of cities, upheld by Jews and Gentiles, governing from the geographical center of Palestine, the western and eastern extremes of the old world, he will occupy earth's vantage places and will do his pleasure among men, according to his satanic ambitions and desires (13:1-8). But his rule will not be for long. At the end of the seven years wrath will be poured out upon the desolator (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 19:19, 20) and the underworld will welcome him whom God will conquer and destroy (Isa. 14:12-20). Also, his trinity of cities will be cast down, Rome and Babylon forever (17:16, 17; 16:17-21; 18:21-23) and Jerusalem until that One who is its rightful King will build it up in righteousness to be the praise and joy of the whole earth (Isa. 60:1-22; 62:1-12).

101

There are, spiritually speaking, two women in Scripture, the true and the false. The first of these was typified by the unfallen Eve (Gen. 2:21-24), and the second by the fallen one (Gen. 3:1-16); and the first finds its antitype in the church (Eph. 5:22-31; Rev. 19:7), and the second in the harlot of this seventeenth chapter (17:1, 2). Also, as the fallen Eve represents a declension from truth (Gen. 3:13; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14), the harlot does the same (17:4). Thus it is that the Spirit presents to our view the harlot woman as holding in her hand one of the golden altar bowls (17:4), which betokens her professed religiousness, and that He then reveals the fact that the bowl is full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication (17:4), which betokens her wanton attractiveness and seducing power. In addition, the Spirit declares that this woman is the "mother of harlots" (17:5), which indicates that her religious, carnal union with the Antichrist and the kings of the earth produces a brood of spiritual harlots like unto herself (17:1, 2); and which indicates further, that her progeny is scattered beyond her own city and ecclesiastical confines into the far bounds of the earth and of apostate relationships, thus fulfilling the word that the "great harlot" sits upon many waters, that is, has her seat in the midst of many nations (17:1, 15). And finally, the Spirit reveals the fact that this adulterous woman of apostasy makes alliance with the beast, that is, the Antichrist (17:3)--who is full of names of blasphemy (17:3)--and, having secured his political standing and power joins with him in persecuting the saints, who become the martyrs of Jesus, until she is actually drunken with their blood (17:6), thus bringing to pass the great tribulation in its most intensive form. As related to this last, it is interesting to note that there have been two great persecutions of Christians in the past. The first of these was the ten-fold persecution of apostolic and post-apostolic times; and the second was the one which grew out of the Reformation. The former of these was one of a state against the church; and the latter was one of an apostate church against the true church. This seventeenth chapter reveals the fact that there is to be a third great persecution, and that this last will be one of a combined apostate church and state against the true church, the apostate church supplying the characteristics of religious hatred and fanaticism, and the antichristian state those of governmental authority and power (17:3-6, 12-14). Of the three, it is plain that the last will be the most comprehensive and terrible.

102

It is evident from the eighth and tenth verses of the seventeenth chapter that the Antichrist is to be a satanically miraculous personage. According to these verses, he will be one of seven kings, five of whom, in John's day, had passed away, one of whom was living and one of whom was yet to come. The Antichrist, being one of the first five of the seven and being then dead--it is possible that Alexander the Great is in mind (see Paragraph 37)--had gone into the abyss (17:8, 11). At the same time, being yet to come he would appear after the seven and would thus become an eighth (17:11). Revealing and enlarging these statements, we may make the following declarations concerning this Man of Sin: first, he would be a king who had ruled on the earth; second, he had finished his earthly course when John was living; third, he was, when John wrote, shut up in the abyss; fourth, he would be reincarnated, that is, his spirit would be brought up from the underworld, located in a human body, and given liberty to re-enter earthly existence and activity; fifth, he would, in this reincarnated state, be a king, would rule over a ten-fold kingdom, would be Satan's tool, and would fulfill his diabolical purposes in making war against the Lamb and His saints; and finally, he would be overcome by the Lamb and meet his doom by being sent, finally and forever, into perdition (17:7-15; 2 Thess. 2:1-12). It is to be noted from the

above that the reincarnation of which the Buddhists and Theosophists speak is not altogether apart from the truth. But according to Scripture, there is only one personage to whom such an experience is granted, namely, the Antichrist. In this single case God permits the Devil, in the last days, to produce this supreme miracle. His doing so will bring upon the scene of life and history the greatest monster of iniquity, next to Satan, which the world has ever seen (2 Thess. 2:3-11). Coming up from the abyss, he will do all the works of that nethermost region, becoming thus the full and exact antithesis of Him who came down from heaven and did the works of that uppermost place. He will thus be openly manifested, as Paul declared, as the Lie (2 Thess. 2:11, R.V.). Happy the men in those deceiving and beguiling days who will be able both to discern and cleave to Him who is the Truth (John 1:14, 17; 14:6; 18:37).

103

God has many ways in which He executes judgment. These may be classified into actions which are direct and indirect. Here in this seventeenth chapter it is indirect judgment. Verse three shows us that a great alliance is to be formed in the last days between the woman, that is, systematized apostasy, and the scarlet-colored beast, that is, the Antichrist (17:3). Verse twelve reveals the fact that this alliance will be established throughout the European world by means of a political confederation which will be formed between the Antichrist and ten kings (17:12). Verse fourteen makes it clear that the connecting tie between the Antichrist and the apostate systems, inclusive of Rome, will be a common hatred for Christ as the atoning Lamb of God, and for the saints as those who are called through Him, chosen by Him, and faithful to Him (17:14). And verse sixteen presents the startling scene of a final break between the Antichrist and the woman, each having used the other to secure world-wide power, and the Man of Sin utilizing at last his political resources to rend and destroy his partner in spiritual corruption (17:16). There can be little doubt of the fact that the occasion of this turning of the Antichrist against the harlot woman is to be found in his self-deification, where having secured all he can from his consort in crime, he will brook no longer an equal companionship in reputation and glory but will destroy her who has come to claim too much. It is evident that the Antichrist will do what he does with the single purpose of establishing himself in a world-wide authority and obtaining for himself universal worship (13:1-18). But God is over all his actions, and, though he knows it not, he is but a pliant tool in the divine hands for the fulfillment of the providential purposes of judgment toward harlot Rome and all her allied systems. Thus indirectly through the Antichrist, but with terrible directness of result, the bolt of judgment finally falls and all the corrupt "Christian" systems of earth are brought to an end. What afterwards remains is the direct issue which will exist between a diabolical Antichrist and a divine Christ (17:11-18).

104

The eighteenth chapter records the second judgment, that of commercial Babylon (18:1-24). We are to understand that the description given is entirely literal, and that it thus refers to a city which is to be rebuilt on the site of ancient Babylon and is to bear its name. A careful reading of the prophecy which Isaiah uttered concerning Babylon (Isa. 13:1-22) will reveal the fact that its reach is far beyond the fall of the city which occurred in the past (cir. 300 B.C.). In the first place, certain prophesied events (Isa. 13:20-22) have never yet been

fulfilled, for there have been for long villages and their inhabitants upon and within the city's ruins, Arabians have pitched their tents there and shepherds have made their fold there; and in the second place, the whole prophecy is connected with the day of the Lord (Isa. 13:6, 9), which is the day of the Lord's vengeance upon the Antichrist and his followers, and hence, one which is yet to be (see Paragraph 16). Isaiah's prophecies, therefore, have only had a first and minor fulfillment. This means that the second and major one lies somewhere in the future. But to make this last possible, Babylon must be rebuilt, for a city which does not exist cannot be destroyed. As to such a rebuilding, men may now more easily believe in its possibility than formerly. It is a well known fact that the German Kaiser fully planned to reestablish Babylon, and, no doubt, he would soon have brought this to pass in case he had secured world dominion. Also, it is an open secret that Britain is deeply interested in the project of rebuilding the city, particularly in view of the fact that she has been granted the mandate over Palestine, for she sees the immense value such a place would have to her as a connecting, commercial link between the east and west. Moreover, Sir William Willcocks, by his engineering investigations, has shown to all the world that it is possible to reestablish Babylon as a great international mart, for he has proved that the ancient canals, which once made Babylonia like the garden of the Lord, only need the touch of the engineer's rod and the workman's spade to turn them again into rivers of fertilization and fruitfulness. Thus from the combined standpoint of divine prophecy, national hope and scientific promise, we may conclude that Babylon will be rebuilt. And there is every reason to believe, when this comes to pass, that the city, occupying a unique geographical and international position, will become the greatest metropolis which the world has ever seen.

105

Commercial greatness in cities does not often make for righteousness. Indeed, history indicates that its trend is usually in the opposite direction. And this being true, it is generally the case that the greater the city the greater the unrighteousness. It is happily a fact that there is frequently to be found in the midst of godless cities a very godly company of saints. But such a company, under these conditions, is not much better than a flock of kids among wolves. Now, all these characteristics are found in this eighteenth chapter, as connected with future Babylon. It is a city which is great beyond compare, except as the Holy City will exceed it (18:9-19). It is one which, along with increase of wealth, has multiplied iniquities beyond any city earth has known (18:1-3, 5). It is one which has defied and plagued the saints of the Most High in excess of any metropolis which has ever existed (18:20, 24). It is one whose sinfulness and persecution are so great that the saints are called forth from it as the only hope of their finding spiritual separateness and physical preservation (18:4). And it is one which finally meets with God's double of punishment, being utterly and forever overwhelmed (18:6-8). It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31); and Antichrist and his followers, as here recorded, are beginning to find this out. Not that this leads any of this company to repent of their misdeeds. They are reprobates beyond recovery, and judgment only confirms them in their rebellion against heaven. They are, therefore, foredoomed. And here through this chapter of devastation we see the beginnings of divine judgment falling upon them in the destruction of this notable city of Babylon. Its political power and commercial wealth have been, evidently, the foundation upon which Antichrist and his followers have built their babel tower toward heaven (18:5), and its overthrow moves these impious ones mightily (18:9, 10, 19). But

by so much as earth mourns over Babylon's downfall, heaven rejoices over it (18:20). It is notable that the only Alleluias recorded in the Revelation are occasioned by the destruction of this greatest and wickedest of earth's dwelling places (19:1-4).

106

One of the most perplexing mysteries of life is found in the fact that sometimes earth's best things are found to be its worst. And this mystery is made even more perplexing by the added fact that often these best things are discovered to be the gifts of God to man and meant by Him to be for his temporal and eternal good. Take, for instance, the list of objects mentioned in the twelfth and thirteenth verses of this eighteenth chapter: gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine linen, purple, silk, scarlet, all thyine wood, vessels of ivory, vessels of most precious wood, brass, iron, marble, cinnamon, odors, ointments, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, beasts, sheep, horses and chariots (18:12, 13). All of these are good and perfect gifts and may be regarded as having come from above, from the Father of lights (Jas. 1:17). This is seen to be the case when one remembers the fact that nearly everything mentioned in the long list given was, in the old time, connected and identified by God with the tabernacle and temple. And yet here these beautiful and sacred things are found in Babylon, are the signs of men's spiritual defilement and are the objects of God's wrath and destruction. This is hard to be understood. But we get a glimpse of the inner meaning of things when we note and add to the list above quoted a few words there omitted, namely, "slaves, and souls of men" (18:13). These words suggest not only lawful trafficking in the goodly gifts of God, but also unlawful trafficking in the same; and it is this unlawful practicing on the part of Antichrist and his fellows which will turn Babylon and its crafts from the legitimate into the illegitimate, from the tolerable into the intolerable. This is an old story, for history is full of it. Men have unceasingly laid hold upon the fairest gifts of grace and turned them into the foulest. And they have generally done this for sake of gain. The cry of man down the ages has been, "Money, we must have money!" and in the process of getting money they have sold their souls and those of their fellows. It appears then that the gifts of God are good or bad according to the use which men make of them. Let the man be bad as he uses a gift of God and immediately the gift becomes like the man. In this instance, Antichrist takes priceless treasures, including lives and souls, and uses them ruthlessly for commercial gain; and, like a lightning flash from heaven, God's pronouncement against him and his great city goes forth.

107

The successive series of punishments meted out to sinful men, from the trumpet period to the judgment, indicates that God is not the weakling that He is, in these modern times, supposed and represented to be. It is admitted that God in the Old Testament economy was a God of judgment. But it is held that Christ introduced something new into the divine order by the revelation of His gentleness and mercy, and that He so much altered the ways, if not the very character of God, that never again may consuming fires of judgment fall from heaven upon them. The reading of the Revelation corrects conclusions of this sort. Here is the vision not only of God, but also of Christ sitting upon heaven's throne and pouring out wrath--seal upon seal, trumpet upon trumpet, thunder upon thunder, vial upon vial, and judgment upon judgment--until the heaven is black and the earth is shaken, and

men are crying out in awful fear. The truth of the matter is, men have persisted, in spite of revelation and experience, in fashioning for themselves a god of their own and calling it "God" and "Christ," whereas their produce is no more like the Jehovah of Scripture than earth is like heaven. The God of the New Testament as well as of the Old is indeed a God of grace. But He is also a Man of war. That is a remarkable word of Paul where he says at Athens, "He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the *man* whom he has ordained" (Acts 17:31); and that is a most remarkable vision in the Revelation where Christ, who is called Faithful and True, is seen coming as a white horse warrior and is declared to be the One who in righteousness "doth judge and make war" (19:11). It is quite true of Christ that a "bruised reed shall he not break and smoking flax shall he not quench." But this is only the case "till he send forth judgment unto victory" (Isa. 42:3; Matt. 12:20). In other words, there is a time of grace and another of judgment, and the one follows the other as surely as the night follows the day. The day of grace has long been extended, wherein it has been grace upon grace. But the night of judgment, according to the Revelation, will soon fall upon the earth, wherein it will be judgment upon judgment. And the darkest aspect of it all is not the wrath of God and the fear of men, terrible as these are, but rather that neither wrath nor fear leads men to repentance but only to further hardness of heart and increased enmity against God (6:12-17; 9:20, 21; 11:8-11; 16:8-11, 20, 21). God is long-suffering. Nevertheless, if men insist upon withdrawing themselves from His mercy, the Lord will come as a thief, to judge and destroy (2 Pet. 3:9, 10). "Behold then the *goodness and severity of God*" (Rom. 11:22).

108

That the church is on earth through the days of the Antichrist, that is, until the time in view at the beginning of the nineteenth chapter, seems to be made certain as a result of considering the following lines of proof to this effect: First, Christians are evidently present in the Laodicean period (3:14-22)--the apostate conditions of which may only be found in the time of the great apostasy--which is the time of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:1-4). Second, there is no hint of the resurrection and translation of the church where such are usually said to take place, namely, in the fourth chapter of the Revelation. Third, the record states that companies of believers are in the midst of earth's events up to the time of the destruction of the city of Babylon (18:1-24), the distinctly Christian phraseology used forbidding the thought that these are only orthodox Jews or are Jews who are post-advent believers but not a part of the body of Christ, and confirming the thought that they are true members of the church, since those who live "hold the testimony of Jesus" and those who die "die in the Lord" (7:3; 8:3, 4; 12:17; 13:7-10; 14:4, 12, 13; 16:15; 17:6; 18:4, 24). Fourth, the verse in the book which mentions the completion of the church, when the resurrection and translation must necessarily occur, combines with it the express statement that this takes place when the seventh trumpet begins to sound (10:7), which carries forward the events of resurrection and translation into the days of the Antichrist and brings them to a time just before the close of his career (11:7, 15). Fifth, the passage which first describes the resurrection and translation is found in the introduction (see the Analysis) of the vial and judgment periods (14:1-5, 14-16), which leads to the conclusion that it points forward to the judgment of the saints, this event being portrayed in the nineteenth chapter (19:1-10) and located after the days of the Antichrist and just previous to his judgment (19:19, 20). Sixth and lastly, it is clear that the church is the only body which has part in the first resurrection and which shares with Christ His millennial reign (20:1-6),

and yet the passage which proves this fact positively states that a part of that body is made up of those who were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, nor in their hands (20:4). It follows, therefore, that Christians remain on earth through the days of the Antichrist, witness against him, and are persecuted by him. All this being the case, the whole company of believers--since the church is not divided at the time of the resurrection and translation--is caught up to meet the Lord after the events in the days of the Antichrist above described have taken place (Dan. 12:1-3; Matt. 24:15-30; Rev. 14:9-16).

109

The thought is often expressed and still more often felt that God loves His saints too well to allow them to stand face to face with the Antichrist and to pass through the great tribulation. If Scripture and experience teach this, all controversy, of course, is immediately ended. But do they? Did God love Christ too well to forbid His standing before His antichrist and passing through His great tribulation? Or, if it is said--as it may most justly be said--that Christ was unique in His experiences, did God love Peter, James, John, and Paul too well for this; or the apostolic church; or the church of the Reformation; or the more modern Christians of Armenia, Madagascar, and China? It is a historical fact that the church, from apostolic days to the present, has always faced antichrists (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7) and has frequently passed through periods of tribulation (2:10, 13; 3:10); and the Scripture makes it plain that this will be her appointed portion to the end of her earthly pilgrimage (Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:35; 1 Thess. 3:4). There is no occasion, then, for surprise on the part of the church when an antichrist arises and persecution comes. As a matter of fact, there is more need for surprise when there are no antichrists and persecutions. Indeed, this latter is so true that Christians may well question in times of universal quiet and peace if things are with them spiritually just what they ought to be. For suffering, not comfort, is the appointed lot of God's heritage, even as Paul said: "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long, we were accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Rom. 8:36); and again, "We must through much tribulation (or, many tribulations, R.V.) enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). The fact of the matter is, the dealing of God with His saints and especially their dealing with Him, during about a hundred years past, have brought His people to some seriously false conclusions concerning suffering. On God's side, there has been granted to the modern church a breathing space in order that there might be ample and unhindered opportunity to pass through divinely opened doors. But on the side of the saints, the vast majority of these have gladly accepted the breathing space thus given and then have refused to pass through the opened doors. In time, therefore, these saints have come to conclude that the prosperity of quiet and easement from suffering is not only their lot, but also their right. What a shock it was in 1900, therefore, when the Boxer movement broke over their cherished kith and kin like a devastating storm! In those days of sorrow many a soul secretly demanded to know of God what He was doing. His only answer was, the allowance of further torture and death--till the storm had passed. And yet since then He has given another and even more dreadful answer to questioning souls, as France, Germany, Turkey, and Armenia bear witness. It is significant, in the letter to the Philadelphian church, that He who says "He opens and no man shuts" also says "He shuts and no man opens," and that this same One immediately adds that there is an hour of trial which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth (3:7-10). It is evident that the Hand that bears the key of David,

and which turned for a time the usual of suffering into the unusual of peace, will in coming days turn the unusual of peace into the usual of suffering; for accumulating evidence indicates that the church which had torment in the old days but has sat at ease in the new will be called upon to re-enter bloodstained paths and follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes. It may be regarded as exegesis, but it may be reckoned as analogy that Christ thrice asked Peter, who was appointed unto suffering and death, if he loved Him, and that, so far, He has asked Christians at large this same question but twice--once in apostolic days and once in Reformation--which suggests that the third time is yet to be. And as Peter confessed his Lord three times over and confirmed, finally, his words by willing death, so the church has said twice and will say thrice, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee!" and they too will willingly seal their covenant-troth by poured-forth blood.